A Heart on Borrowed Time

Short synopsis • Naria Khan

When the hunter Rook Arden steals Lord Sorn's spare glass heart intending to destroy it, a needlehound brings him down. Dying in Verenne's clinic, he asks to pay her. She tells him he can pay her later and grafts the stolen heart into his chest. In twelve days Sorn's claim on the glass closes. Removing it will kill Rook.

Rook once supplied the hounds Sorn used to intimidate people Verenne has treated. Now he gives her the plan of Sorn's house and his money to shelter her displaced patients. As she comes to love him, she learns how the heart was made. Her teacher Zélie spent her own healing gift to secure Sorn's protection. Someone must surrender another whole gift to turn the glass into flesh.

They steal Sorn's seal, which they must melt in the original furnace. Zélie lets his men through the gate, and Sorn recovers it and takes Linnet, Verenne's fellow healer. At the furnace he offers to send Linnet home to her children if she gives up her gift for Rook. He intends Verenne to help make him another heart.

Rook refuses. Verenne takes the seal back, and when Sorn threatens Linnet, Linnet tells her to finish. Rook gives up the gift that lets him hear living pulses. Verenne turns the glass to flesh. When Sorn seizes Verenne, Rook kills him with his own sword. Afterwards Rook tells the quay watch what he did in Sorn's service. Three months later Verenne lies beside him upstairs while Linnet takes the clinic. She hears two beats under his scar and lets herself stop counting.